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Prospects for health and welfare NGOs in Central Asia

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1. Introduction

- The continuing importance of civil society's work in the health and welfare sectors – an INTRAC view
- Important variations in our region – the five countries of CA and their closest neighbours (Russia, Mongolia)
- Negative effect of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine

2. Health and welfare NGOs in Kyrgyzstan

- A recent portrait of the NGO sector – sectoral breakdown of civil society activities and beneficiaries
- The difficulty of assessing the work of local, informal and unregistered groups
- CSOs working to improve the quality of municipal services – case study of the EU-UNDP social justice project
- Tackling the problems of urban and rural youth – the UNICEF youth centre project
- Potential collaboration areas – USAID's regional study

3. Problems in the legal and political environment

- Continuing viability of NGO work in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, versus less opportunities elsewhere
- Re-registration initiatives as a way of reducing the number of NGOs - Tajikistan
- Certification and standard setting – pluses and minuses of the experience in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan
- Spread of the “international agents” idea to Kyrgyzstan: comments by those contesting the proposed new legislation

4. The external environment and links between local NGOs and international partners

- A good model – the partnership approach of some European INGOs and agencies
- The CIS – a potentially useful regional grouping making use of historical links and social capital
- The conservative assault on “controversial” health and welfare NGOs: eg international adoption, support to gay and lesbian minorities, sex education programmes
- Technical difficulties - eg getting visas, grant-making procedures – likely to continue

5. Conclusion

- Very negative environment of the new Cold War – problems from outside that affect our work
- Trend towards greater collaboration between NGOs and government in social and health services
- Continuing service provision role for NGOs alongside advocacy in key areas (vulnerable groups)
- Importance of accountability work by NGOs due to non or partial implementation of policies on human rights / international standards
- Need to build the capacity of a new generation of CSOs